

TINA MODOTTI

(1892-1942)

**(OUT LINE FOR A FILM)
BY DANILO TRELLES**

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She died alone, lifeless in a taxi taking her home following a dinner with friends.

She died at the age of forty-six, still very beautiful with just a few silver strands in the dark mass of hair knotted simply at the nape of her neck.

The second of Assunta and Giuseppe's seven children (he's a modest Socialist bricklayer), Tina Modotti is born in Udine in 1896.

She spends the first years of her childhood following her father, an emigrant, to Austria. Then, in 1904, Giuseppe Modotti returns to his homeland with his family and the hope of a steady job. But, probably thanks to the Socialist ideals he's always been a faithful advocate of, he soon loses his "steady job".

At the time, Italy is an economically depressed country in which an undeniable yearning for a cultural and social Renaissance and an evident search for "national" identity is coupled, in most of the regions, with the most simple and dramatic problems of survival, of malphabetism, of hunger.

Work is scarce everywhere in the country and badly paid at any rate. The Modotti family is no exception. Their economic difficulties multiplying.

Restless and enterprising, Giuseppe chooses the route to America like so many of his countrymen.

Alone this time, he settles down in San Francisco.

As soon as she finishes elementary school, Tina-- the most serious, most conscientious of the children--helps her family. Still wearing the checkered apron she wore to school just a year before, she enters a weaving mill.

By day she works in the large, damp rooms to the rhythm of the moving looms. In the evening she helps her mother at home, her reddened, perennially cut little hands darning and putting patches on torn clothes with conscientious skill. She takes care of her brothers and sisters and, at night, when the smallest pile up in her bed trying to find a little warmth, she patiently puts them to sleep by telling them fantastic stories about their distant father with her already adult voice...

She'll continue that hard life without ever knowing the joy of a child's game, only tasting the flavor of hunger, the bite of cold, the responsibility of knowing how to give up all necessities for the smaller and therefore needier children until she's seventeen: her father has finally scraped up the small sum needed for a third class, one way ticket to San Francisco and wants her to join him.

The very beautiful girl with
getting off the boat in America in 1913
old and probably doesn't have any dream

ling eyes
years

Only practical problems: find
well so the rest of the family can join
in this wonderful country guaranteeing
one's head.

away, earn
father
of over

Giuseppe Modotti is a good man
He's known and well considered everywhere
prudent about things, sending home that
has allowed his family to survive decently
sacrifice, putting aside anything "extra"
the whole family can face what will certainly
better future in this country that keeps

worker.

hat
great
tomorrow"
ar
s.

Perhaps now, with Tina's arrival

Just one week after her arrival
Tina is already at work in a factory with
one word of English. (What would she need
for, anyway? She doesn't have any friends
comments with).

ancisco,
wing

Father and daughter work hard.

They've found a large, more than
the Italian quarter.

use in

At the end of that same year
family settles down in California.

Modotti

But what is America like in those days? It's a lively, domineering country filled with contrasts but stimulating. It's a country that'll suffocate you if you don't keep moving; but at the same time it encourages you, pushes you forward to make yourself heard. Democrat Woodrow Wilson has just been elected President. With his political caution, he tends towards the economical stabilization of the country (the reduction of customs taxes takes place during those years), promoting all initiatives tending to consolidate the economic empire of such a resource rich country.

Those are hot years: The social and cultural "polemic" is born for the first time in the United States along with the fierce race for money, for personal affirmation, the enactment of the ferocious "money talks". They are years during which debates and discussions have all the enthusiasm typical of neophytes.

Tina is attentive, very intelligent and her eyes are sharp. The silence of so many years has magnified her gift for observation. This girl's evolution from the modest--if not nonexistent--cultural hinterland. Just a few years ago she could barely sign her name in a childish scrawl. Yet, here she is now, jotting down clear, cutting notes with precise handwriting in good, synthetic English even if, when she speaks, she retains a vaguely exotic accent.

Only one year has gone by since her arrival in the United States.

Tina "participates" in the country's life. She's up front in the factory union. She's gone down into the streets with other women pushing the women's emancipation movement, at the birth of its exuberant ferment.

She keeps on working in the factory and acting in the naive emigrant theatrical group. But her horizons widen. She studies, reads and discusses.

In a reunion of young people, she has met a young man with an important sounding name: Roubaix de L'Abrey Rich  y of French-Canadian origin. He's thin, tall, sensitive, with intelligent eyes. He paints and writes poetry.

Tina has just left the factory and works as a dress maker in private homes. This permits her to apply herself more to her studies and be part of a completely different social ambience than the one she came from even though she keeps on helping her family with her profits from work.

1917.

Tina has married Roubaix. (His friends call him

"Robo".)

They've gone to live in his studio.

The studio consists of a wide, long room with tall windows and a wooden floor. There's a massive heater at the center of it. Robo's easel and Tina's dressmaker's mannequin are in fine display next to it. Tina continues her work "at home". They often work silently, one next to the other, with the old fashioned phonograph with its horn going, taking turns winding up its handle. They're fond of each other. It's a quiet, reassuring affection for both of them. There may be no passion perhaps, but a very deep, precious feeling.

Invariably, the studio is crowded in the evenings: it's a meeting place for poets, painters, men of literature, cinematographers.

The violent echo of the European war domineeringly reaches this "neutral" country. And not that war alone. Right close to home, in Mexico, Pancho Villa has once again hurled the revolt against the pro-American government of Carranza.

The atmosphere in Robo and Tina's studio is often heated. The first regurgitations of a "new" are penetrate it: Schönberg's music, the photographs of the Demoiselles D'Avignon of Picasso, the first stories by Joyce, Ezra Pound's poems. The young American intelligenzia breaks up into fractions, vivified. Tina drinks up the cultural yearnings of her time, participates in the social movements

sprouting up like mushrooms in the period of the "Great War", discusses face to face with the young, starving libertarians crowding Robo's studio.

She's not shy nor is she arrogant. Tina is severe and open minded. She's self confident--if that's how we can put it--about her "good will": a good will that is ever more* equal to culture and gives birth to ideas and idealisms.

She seeks some form of expression, whatever it may be. She tries to burst out of her cocoon and turn into what she unconsciously knows she already is.

Together with a couple of screenwriting friends, she once went to Hollywood.

This suburb of Los Angeles was born but a while ago. It's only had a name for ten years. Here the independent filmmakers are fighting their courageous battle against the American cinematographic trust. It's an ideal place thanks to its climate. It's well worth it to try and defeat the uncontrasted domination of the NewYrk firms dictating laws both around the market and around the creative production of the authors of this new art.

By forming a cooperative, a modest society, the filmmakers are attempting to make use of all this. The first motion picture studios have started to grow--timidly at first. This seems to really be the year they can cry out

victory if Cecil B. De Mille, the rising star of American cinema, has decided to not pay any attention to New York and come right here, to Los Angeles; to make "The Cheat".

Tina is curious about every kind of experience; she has accompanied her filmmaker friends to an appointment in a motion picture studio.

The result is that, while her friends' screenplay is refused, Tina is asked to test for a part in a film.

She accepts almost as a joke, to not be impolite to her friends who introduced her to the director. The test is a triumph.

So Tina makes her debut in cinema; not with a small role, but as the antagonist of the most popular star of the period.

It's a strange chapter in Tina Modotti's story.

Sincere and passionate, unable to compromise in any way, Tina gives herself to her new profession with typically Italian seriousness. In other words, she tries to do the best she can, continuing to cultivate herself and her own mind. At the same time, she cannot help but be partially proud of the success she unfailingly obtains with her roles. To see them now, the films that made Modotti a star—"The

Tiger With The Fiery Eyes"--certainly make us smile. Stereotyped Spanish, Italian or Mexican roles completely exploiting her sweet and, at the same time, aggressive beauty? But this was the cinema of those times. It told simple stories and filled the screen with batting eyelashes and rich sets and costumes.

At any rate, success--even if so great and, let's admit it, so well paid--was not what Tina aspired for.

All she has to do is catch a glimpse of other possibilities of expression and Hollywood, the lights, the gowns, the popularity; the applause, the certain wealth.. all of it could be forgotten without regrets.

Could she have made it to greatness in cinema? Certainly! The short road she traveled was without flaps: her talent--though raw--is beyond doubt and then...she's so beautiful..

Yet Tina simply turned her back on Hollywood; perhaps because in so little time (it's 1921) Hollywood has already changed so much. But the, so has the world facing the depression after the Great War. Perhaps because that kind of expression per se did not succeed in fully satisfying her.

Perhaps because she prefers Robo. And Robo's

friends.

Or perhaps because tonight, a slender character has come to Robo's studio along with the others (they never wanted to move and the heater in the middle of the room is still the only really warm spot in the whole place). He's a professional photographer; but a photographer that has nothing in common with his Hollywood-type colleagues. His name is Edward Weston. He's married, the thirty-five year old father of four, and has but one passion: photography...but a kind of photography which is an artistic expression: observation, expression, an image and not an illustration. Technique too...It's undeniable...but at the service of inspiration, in search of an "idea".

Would Tina, the great actress accept to pose without make up and lights, without feathers and sequins for this type of photograph?

1921.

Tina has become a passionate fan of photography. And--with Weston's guidance--she's moved from the occasional role of "model" to behind the camera. She's turned down the last appetizing Hollywood offer: that "half" expression doesn't interest her anymore, she doesn't want to feel like an "object" in anyone else's hands anymore. She doesn't like to appear the symbol of vain, empty beauty. On the

contrary, she catches sight of the possibility of "creating" her own images and developing her own "id" and her own critical sense through her images.

For the first time during this period perhaps, she has neglected Robo. But Robo understands. And he was the first one, and not by chance, to contribute to the "emancipation" of his wife.

Sensitive, intelligent, understanding, Robo wants to do more: he wants to leave her plenty of space.

That's why he accepts a transfer to Mexico, invited by Ricardo Gomez Robelo (the Director of the New Department of Fine Arts in Mexico).

This time it's Tina who doesn't understand. Her husband's departure feels like a betrayal to her...almost blackmail. Why, now that she feels she has found her own way, does Robo prefer to abandon her?

Robo sweetly reassures her: it's just the opposite. He's sure Tina has found her way. He's sure Tina must remain in America now. He's sure his presence would hurt her and that's why he made the decision. On the other hand, it's certainly not a separation: Tina will join him, soon. Very soon.

Mexico is a marvelous country. The nature, the people are sublime...and there's constant ferment: the ferment to be found in a country just blooming, revindicating its rights, being born...

Robo writes: "This country is capable of understanding. This country is capable of giving a space to whoever wants to express himself freely. A new art is truly being born here. And this is a country in which an artist can bloom along with it."

Yes, Tina will join him soon. Very soon.

Weston has fallen in love with Tina.

And perhaps she feels the same way.

At this point, Tina hesitates no longer.

She's on the train. She's packed her bags, has said goodbye to Weston. She's joining her husband in Mexico.

They hand her a telegram on the train.

Robo is dead: he caught smallpox.

Desperate, she'll just be in time to accompany him to the cemetery.

She then decides to settle down in Mexico.

She's all alone now.

She piteously, sweetly goes back over the routes her husband already traveled. Through his eyes, she looks at this country. It reminds her quite a bit of her country of origin. She makes contacts.

Timidly at first, she starts to snap photographs of places she wants to remember...

Remember or interpret...bring to the knowledge of others?

Because, Tina has made up her mind: Robo was right. In this country, there is "space". In this country at birth, one can be born. In this country, you're permitted to participate.

1924.

She has come into contact with the Mexican artists and the art of the moment: Siqueiros, Vasconcelos, Diego Rivera...these are her friends.

The intellectuals exiled from Central and Southern America often find refuge in her always crowded home.

She has organized a show of Weston's photographs.

Definitively ridding herself of her natural and instinctive shyness (how much easier it is to show off one's face, one's body than one's own ideas!) she herself speaks in the first person today, expresses opinions out loud.

Weston has finally become courageous. Distance has evidently heightened his feelings for Tina.

Just one year has passed when Weston decides to leave his wife--even though he does not make the separation

official with a divorce--and join Tina in Mexico. He therefore leaves the States with the excuse of a "study vacation" and takes his eldest son, fourteen year old Chandler, with him.

Once he joins Tina, he decides to be clear, at least in the eyes of his son.

All three of them settle down in Tacubaya, a countryish suburb about 40 miles from Mexico City.

With what's leftover from her Hollywood career, Tina has rented a ten room hacienda looking out over a huge patio from which there's a splendid view of snow capped Popocateptl.

Weston's first months are a kind of terribly sweet vacation. They wander around in picturesque areas without pre-established itineraries. They linger in interminable deals in native marketplaces, taste exotic food, get in touch with the country through the most humble people...

The hacienda is often brightly lit in the evenings.

In fact, Tina's new friends (Xavier Guerrero, Diego Rivera, Jean Charlot, etc.) love to join the couple as soon as they can. There's never wine lacking. Nor are music, the warm sense of hospitality, brilliant intelligence or open minded conversation ever missing.

Tina speaks fluent Spanish. That's why Weston (who barely chews a few words) never leaves her side. In this way he also satisfies his constitutional jealousy.

His son Chandler become very fond of and very familiar with his father's lover and you can often see them laughing together, accomplices without problems.

Perhaps these few months in Tacubaya are the only "young parenthesis" in Tina's life.

The money is about to run out.

They have to roll up their sleeves and start working seriously.

And, naturally, have to leave the hacienda.

They move to Mexico City, in a much more modest house which, nonetheless, has a large terrace up on the roof.

The friendly reunions continue in their house. Only now the guests bring their own bottles of wine, tortillas and tequilla.

Tina is increasingly, conscientiously interested in the social and political problems of Mexico.

The country is in a period of exalting activity. Art, for example, has become a common subject. Art and archeological schools are organized in streets and squares

for children, adults, Indians and half breeds taking conscience around their own artistic and cultural history and their roles as part of it all.

At this point, an ideological fracture comes between Tina and Weston: a fracture visible even in their photographs. Weston's are "artistic"; Tina's are more precisely "social".

Like all fine Americans, Weston is constitutionally, biologically not very politicized. Tina instead tends to rationalize her own emotions and considers politics the only carrier of social progress, whatever it may be.

Weston picks up the color, the folklore of Mexico. Tina makes an effort to understand its problems and share them.

The constant contact with Xavier Guerrero is of extreme importance for her formation in this moment. He's a half breed painter friend of Rivera and a Communist activist who was supposed to abandon art in favor of politics during that period to become one of the directors of the Communist newspaper "El Machete". A very handsome man of few words, intelligent, true to "his" cause with a rare spirit of abnigation, Xavier is the first "political" teacher Tina has ever had.

Tina and Weston continues their common activity but their physical relationship becomes weaker and slowly dissapates.

Weston has another lover.

Tina is overcome by Guerrero's overpowering fascination.

But the "physical" separation between the two of them takes place "naturally", without drama.

Weston returns to the United States for longer and longer periods of time.

Tina clutches on to Mexico as if her most intimate roots really came from that country.

She always dresses very simply, casually, in blue or black. Sometimes, she even dares to wander around the city in blue jeans.

She too has become a Party activist. She collaborates with the paper "El Machete" in every kind of role, photographer or simply as translator from English to Italian.

She takes photographs for books "Idols Behind Altars", Anita Brenner's masterpiece destined to have a considerable success--illustrated as we said by the beautiful photographs Tina had taken.). She continues to have shows of her photographs from time to time. But politics and her social involvement take up most of her time.

She lives alone in a tiny apartment right behind the immense Cathedral square. She has sporadic intimate encounters with Guerrero who respects her, is fond of her,

attracted to her but doesn't want to be involved in a "love story".

She keeps on writing to Weston (from time to time he joins her in Mexico for brief periods, but their relationship is merely one of deep friendship and respective esteem).

June 1928.

It's late in the evening.

Tina's lingered on in the office of Gómez Lorenzo, director of "El Machete".

Together they're finishing an article that absolutely has to go to press tonight. They're tired and all absorbed in their common task when Julio Antonio Mella enters the office. He's a young Cuban activist very well known among Mexican Communists for his ardent courage, for his easy and convincing way of speaking, for his innate fighting spirit: it got him expelled from Cuba and the United States where he had promoted a fiery defense campaign for Anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti.

Mella is not yet thirty. He's tall, dark and very handsome.

Tonight he came to see Gómez Lorenzo to ask him if he can stay there in the newspaper offices for the night: they've thrown him out of his house because he hasn't paid the rent. On the other hand, it's a well known fact

political activity isn't very profitable.

They spend the night together--all three of them--drinking and telling each other of their experiences, their lives.

Julio takes Tina home at dawn.

They remain at her front door, talking.

Then Julio enters.

This time it's love for Tina.

Intense months. Love. Fullness of life--physically, emotionally, ideologically together. A magic period.

They travel Mexico from one end to the other, write, discuss.

Mella has the instinct of the 'leader'. He becomes quite popular, so much so he's the object of threats.

But he doesn't become cautious. True politics don't know caution.

10 January, 1929. Evening.

Mella comes bearing into Gomez Lorenzo's office. He's curious to see one of his articles just off the presses and want to take the first copy of "El Machete" to Tina who

has not read the article and is waiting for him at the Post Office. Mella is late. Before joining Tina he has to go to a bar where he has accepted to meet with another Cuban exile, José Magrina, who has said he knows about a plot Mella is supposed to be the victim of.

Gomez Lorenzo tries to talk Mella out of going to the appointment and offers to go in his stead. Lately, the lives of active Communist members have been in serious danger. There have been attempts made on the newspaper offices themselves and mysterious personal aggressions.

Mella laughs. He's not afraid. He knows Magrina very well: he's a small fearful man always trying to get himself a free lunch or dinner. Tonight he'll fail because Mella has promised Tina a dinner for two, with candlelight perhaps.

He's met Magrina at the bar and got away with two beers and a sandwich.

Now he tells Tina about it, laughing. She's nervous because of the long wait.

It's eleven o'clock at night. The city traffic is still very animated, the streets filled with people.

Mella brought a bottle of already chilled wine with him so he might be forgiven for being so late.

They head towards home just a few hundred meters away.

Mella causally tells Tina about his meeting with Magrifa, but he's evasive: Magrifa's information, he says, is vague...totally unimportant.

They're at the front door. Mella is hit by two shot that perforate his stomach and his left shoulder, penetrating his chest. He manages to stagger up a few steps and then crashes to the ground, breaking his left arm.

He doesn't die right away, loses a great deal of blood.

During the trip in the ambulance towards the hospital, propped up in Tina's arms--she can't cry--he says the assassination attempt is Magrifa's work together with his political adversaries.

They attempt to operate on him.

But at two-fifteen in the morning, Mella dies.

But Tina is not allowed to isolate herself in her pain.

The Mella case immediately becomes a matter of scandal.

The Right takes possession of the "meaty" aspect of the case. Tina is exposed to a real moral lynching so

that her testimony becomes less valid.

The right wing paper "L'Excelsior"--organ of its party-publishes one article after the other on the "Italian's lover". Her relationship with Weston, the relationship with Guerrero (expatriated some months before to the Soviet Union) and with whom Tina has kept on exchanging letters, are brought into it.

Tina is presented to the petit bourgeois mentality and public opinion as a "loose woman for political agitators."

Tina is ordered to Court. She defends herself courageously against nonexistent crimes...meanwhile Magrifa is freed for lack of evidence. The investigation is shelved and everything is reduced to a mere two penny scandalistic story.

The defense their same friends, the members of the Party carry on for Tina and Mella himself is considered to bipartisan.

And the once hospitable country starts to burn under Tina's feet: she's considered an increasingly less desirable guest.

The Mexican political involution is taking place.

The Right is patiently taking over. Tina starts to consider her expulsion from the country very possible if

not inevitable.

The artists keep on helping her. The Party members do what they can.

Rivera courageously "dares" organize a large anthological show of her photographs. Even though there are some unpleasant incidents of a scandalistic flavor, the show is a great success. But the work she's paid for becomes more and more scarce because her name has become a dangerous one.

Finally, the expulsion decree from Mexico arrives.

She can't return to the United States where her political ideas make her anything but desirable.

The Italian Embassy she turns to offers her a visa to re-enter Italy (if she doesn't leave it again). It's a senseless offer if we consider Tina is officially a member of the Communist Party outlawed in Italy from November of 1926.

She's still considering which route to take when she's arrested with the accusation of having made an attempt on the life of the new Mexican President, Ortiz Rubio.

The accusation is absolutely ridiculous: Tina doesn't have the mentality or the capacity, nor the ideals of a terrorist.

She's the first to laugh at such an unsustainable imputation. But one thing becomes terribly clear: she can no longer remain in Mexico. And, if she's fought up to then because her expulsion be cancelled, she must now inevitably cross her arms.

They've released her with a "no evidence to proceed" after thirteen days of prison and senseless interrogations. But they've given her only two days to pack up and leave.

Accompanied by her old friends, Tina leaves Mexico. She sails from Vera Cruz on February 25, 1930.

The "Edam", the ship Tina's traveling on, touches many ports: Tampico, New Orleans, Havana, Vigo, Coruña, Boulogne Sur Mer and, finally, Rotterdam.

The trip--Tina writes Weston--could also be interesting if Tina wasn't watched while on board, without permission to leave the ship.

The trip lasts a month and a half.

But there's another surprise waiting for Tina when she gets to Rotterdam. The Dutch government won't let her

debark while the Italian Embassy asks for her immediate extradition into Mussolini's Italy.

A movement of solidarity springs up among the Dutch workers who underwrite a defense petition for Tina and make up a collection to pay a lawyer who can legally take care of her interests.

Tina is allowed to debark in Holland, but for only one day. At any rate, the lawyer has succeeded in obtaining she not be extradicted to Italy. That's a major victory in itself.

Her Party companions finally manage to obtain a German visa for her.

Tina arrives in Berlin on April 14, 1934.

It's the economic depression Berlin (following the American disaster in 1929) Tina finds before her eyes: a hard, not directly hostile city but in which it's quite difficult to make one's way.

At first she found hospitality with a couple, the De Witts, friends she met in Mexico and who have always been in touch with her thanks to a mutual passion for photography.

Tina naturally lives under a false name and has no political activity or contact. The German political situation

is--at the time--the one we all know.

Tina is known as an American photographer. She uses her husband's name. In her correspondence she also remains very cautious: she's also afraid of causing some problems for her very kind hosts.

She tries to insert herself in work field again but it's not easy. There is no photographer's association in Germany. Supplies are terribly expensive and the possibility of working on one's own negatives is very rare.

Notwithstanding this, Tina manages to make contacts and, above all, to become familiar with the amazing photographic experiences of her overseas colleagues.

A very famous woman photographer, Lotte Jacobi, even manages to organize a show of Tina's Mexican photographs: the only treasure she has managed to take with her from "her" country.

Meanwhile, the Nazi climb to power is in full development.

Tina's position is more and more critical.

Vittorio Vidali (originally from Trieste, already a Communist activist in the United States and then in Mexico, now a member of the Soviet Union Communist Party) intervenes with his help and obtains an expatriation in the Soviet Union for her.

Tina arrives in Moscow in October of 1930.

Under the guidance of Vittorio Vidali she enters the Party School and becomes a member of the International Red Rescue (she had already been a member of it in Mexico).

She writes to Weston--and it's the last letter she'll ever write her friend--that she's living an "entirely" new and extremely interesting life."

She's put in touch with the exponents of the flourishing Soviet film industry, with the expert photographers of German derivation who have pushed their techniques to real masterpieces of style. Even Eisenstein, who is preparing "Que W. Mexico" admires and studies her works.

The something suddenly changes. But what?

Photography doesn't interest her anymore.

Or perhaps it's Vidali who surrounds her with a different structure.

She has gotten to the point of selling her beloved camera. She definitely gives herself to politics as humbly as a modest apprentice. She forgets her past life, her work, art and she turns herself over to ideological battles it with the humility of someone who has been converted. She enters the Party School.

We don't know much about her life during those

years.

She's Vittorio Vidali's lover. And Vidali is a very mysterious character. He's too political to be completely reconstructed even though he's alive or half alive--lucid even in old age.

All we know of him is that he transferred to Spain when the Spanish Republic was proclaimed (1931) and that he worked a great deal in this country and outside it. That's why Vidali prepared his woman so she would be a perfect partner...a "long arm" of his.

He certainly "used" Tina for his secret missions.

And Tina certainly must have known about it, Participated intimately in his work.

But the work was very "delicate". There are few, vague news until 1934. Then we find her in Paris, France.

She's still in contact with the Soviet Union through the Red Rescue she's a part of along with Vidali; Under the name of Carlos Contreras, he's organizing the Popular Front in Spain. Tina works as an interpreter and translator, organizes strikes and demonstrations.

From time to time she manages to join Vidali in Spain too. But she's left no trace of her trips, of her "missions" which are certainly very "reserved".

Finally, in 1935, she definitely joins Vidalí in Spain for good.

We find her working tirelessly in the Worker's Hospital in Madrid, in the very heart of the Civil War. The hospital has been abandoned by the Fascists.

Vidalí is leading the Fifth Column. Tina--who's known in Spain with the simple name "Maria"--is part of the troops. She humbly works as a nurse, as a food carrier; but it's Tina who organizes aid for the wounded and the missing as a protagonist. In the meantime, she writes articles for the Red Rescue weekly "Ayuda".

1937.

She's in Valencia for the Defense of Culture Against Fascism Congress along with Pablo Neruda, André Malraux, Silvestre Revueltas, Amplica Arenal De Siqueiros, and Juan de la Cabada...

Then, once again humbly, courageously in the midst of war, at the front or behind the lines, taking care of the wounded.

Up to the last moment. Up to the last breath.

Up to the disastrous finale of that war.

There she is, one of the thousands of political refugees, leaving France with a perfectly false passport declaring she is Carmen Ruiz Sanchez...a Spanish woman. This way she can leave France to go to Mexico where Carlos Contreras alias Vittorio Vidali has already sought and found refuge.

She lands in Vera Cruz April 19, 1939, ten years after her expatriation from Mexico.

The country she finds upon her return is very different from the one she left.

It's a country that has known other political torments and is only now searching for a dimension and a balance of its own.

Tina is tired.

She lives with her man who is still politically involved.

But she is tired.

She bought another camera. She does the illustrations for a book on Mexico: nostalgic pictures filled with melancholia, almost as if she now wanted to communicate a kind of reasoned resignation through those images.

Not that she's distracted, not that she doesn't still believe in the ideals she's always believed in. It's just that there are so many wounds and she needs to go off by herself a bit and let them heal.

Right, January 5, 1942.

Barely a year has passed since she managed to have the decree of her expulsion from Mexico so many years before cancelled.

And she's legally been Tina Modotti for only a year now.

She's dining with friends tonight. They've drunk well and eaten even better. The atmosphere is serene, relaxed and friendly.

Carlos Contreras went home before her. He had an article to finish.

She preferred to remain for a while. The evening is so pleasant. There's a young boy playing the guitar...and the faces of friends, the words of friends. Then, it's really late. Tina decides to leave almost sadly.

They've called a taxi for her.

She died alone, lifeless in a taxi taking her home following a dinner with friends.

She died at the age of forty-six, still very beautiful with just a few silver strands in the dark mass of hair knotted simply at the nape of her neck.

Tomorrow, Neruda will write on her tomb, covered
with Mexican flowers:

Puro es tu dulce nombre,
Pura es tu fragil vida...